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ABSTRACT

The provincial results of the English 33 Achievement Test administered June 8, 1982, as part of the Student Achievement Testing Program of Alberta Education are presented in this report. Following a list of the requirements of Part A (written expression), the first section describes the categories used to assess total expression and the scoring measures employed to evaluate four aspects of writing: thought and detail, organization, matters of choice, and matters of convention (grammar and format). A summary of the distribution for each assessment indicates that most papers were considered "limited" in both total expression and aspect categories. The second section describes the subsections of Part B (reading--multiple choice): (1) meanings; (2) techniques, structures, and forms; and (3) presentation of character. It also includes a sample reading passage and test items. The average scores for each subsection and for the whole of Part B are presented, indicating that students performed an average of 44% overall. A list of distribution sites and an address to which teachers may write for further information and additional copies of the exam are included. (JD)

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SUMMARY REPORT

English 33 Achievement Test

Student Evaluation Branch

November 1982

Alberta
EDUCATION

This report presents the provincial results of the English 33 Achievement Test administered June 8, 1982 as part of the Student Achievement Testing Program of Alberta Education. The program tests levels of student achievement in science, mathematics, social studies, and the language arts on a cyclical basis in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. Commencing in the 1983-84 school year, achievement testing at the Grade 12 level will be shifted to Grade 11. Nearly 3 800 students wrote the English 33 test. This report highlights findings of the test and presents them as discussion points. Included are the results of both the Written Expression and the Multiple-Choice sections of the test.

FINDINGS

- In Part A - Written Expression, 37% of the students produced compositions that were judged to be competent or better.
- In Part B - Multiple-Choice, the provincial average score was 44%.

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LIMITATIONS

- The findings are limited to those which can be obtained from a pencil-and-paper test; many skills developed in language arts cannot be measured by this type of test.
- Although speaking, listening, and viewing are important aspects of the language arts curriculum, the test was limited to reading and writing.
- The items on the test cover a representative sample of the reading and writing objectives in the language arts curriculum.
- The test is based on the curriculum as prescribed by the Minister of Education and presented in the *Program of Studies*. It is not possible to reflect each local jurisdiction's unique interpretation of the program.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGLISH 33 ACHIEVEMENT TEST

- The 4 1/2 hour test had two parts:

  Part A- Written Expression (2 1/2 hours)
  Part B- Multiple-Choice (2 hours)

DESCRIPTION OF PART A - WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Students were required to choose one of the statements below as a basis for writing a composition.

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1. In a threatened world, we do possess those qualities which will enable us to survive and progress toward a better world.

2. Some part of the drama of life, e.g., conflict, chance, or coincidence, provides the raw material from which report, story, or song is created.

3. Cooperation and concern for others are important to members of any society. The nonconformist, however, may also contribute to the improvement of society.

4. In our society, a person is often identified by the work he performs. In a society without work, a new way of determining a person's identity would be needed.

5. The sting of disappointment and defeat can be lessened through humor, patience, and optimism.

DESCRIPTION OF SCORING PROCEDURE FOR PART A - WRITTEN EXPRESSION

- English 33 compositions and English 30 compositions were intermixed and sent to regional marking centres for scoring. Compositions were marked by more than 200 experienced teachers of high school English under the direction of Alberta Education staff. When marking a composition, the scorers had no way of knowing the identity of the student who wrote the composition or the course in which he was enrolled.

- Each composition was marked for TOTAL EXPRESSION by four or more scorers working independently. Five TOTAL EXPRESSION categories were used.

TOTAL EXPRESSION CATEGORIES

CATEGORY	SCORE	DESCRIPTION
EXCEPTIONAL	5	Compositions demonstrating exceptional thought and expression supported by carefully chosen details to develop the central idea, and a mature use of language throughout, were judged to be "exceptional".
PROFICIENT	4	Compositions demonstrating proficient thought and expression, appropriate use of details to develop the central idea, and a mastery of language structures were judged to be "proficient".
COMPETENT	3	Compositions demonstrating competent thought and expression, use of conventional details to develop the central idea, and an awareness of and attention to language structures were judged to be "competent".
LIMITED	2	Compositions demonstrating limited thought and expression, casual use of details suggesting only a partly developed central idea, and a lack of assurance in the use of language structures were judged to be "limited".
UNSATISFACTORY	1	Compositions demonstrating unacceptable thought and expression at a Grade 12 level, lack of a central idea, disorganized content, and faulty use of language structures were judged to be "unsatisfactory".

- In addition, each of the scorers also marked one of four aspects of writing: THOUGHT AND DETAIL, ORGANIZATION, MATTERS OF CHOICE, or MATTERS OF CONVENTION. Each aspect was marked using a five-point marking system.

ASPECT CATEGORIES

THOUGHT AND DETAIL

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
5	Ideas are refreshing and invite the reader to read with anticipation.
4	Ideas are appropriate to purpose and have some claim to uniqueness.
3	Ideas are acceptable but commonplace.
2	A haphazard selection of ideas sometimes obscures purpose.
1	Ideas are inadequate to convey purpose or point of view.

ORGANIZATION

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
5	Work is skillfully crafted. It is ordered and coherent, with apt emphasis throughout.
4	Work is proficiently organized. Order and coherence are evident throughout most of the work.
3	Work is organized with considerable attention to order and coherence.
2	Work presents haphazard organization with occasional evidence of order and coherence.
1	Work shows inadequate sense of order and coherence.

MATTERS OF CHOICE

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
5	Sophisticated selection of words and use of structures result in accuracy, precision, and effectiveness.
4	Proficient selection of words and use of structures contribute to accurate and appropriate expression.
3	Competent selection of words and use of structures indicate considerable attention to accuracy and precision.
2	Limited selection of words and use of structures indicate questionable attention to accuracy and precision.
1	Inadequate selection of words and use of structures indicate insufficient attention to accuracy and precision.

MATTERS OF CONVENTION (SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, CAPITALIZATION, FORMAT)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
5	The composition exhibits sophisticated handling of conventions.
4	The composition exhibits proficient handling of conventions.
3	The composition exhibits considerable attention to conventions.
2	The composition exhibits sporadic attention to conventions.
1	The composition exhibits a lack of knowledge of or an unwillingness to attend to conventions.

RESULTS OF PART A - WRITTEN EXPRESSION

- A summary of the distribution of TOTAL EXPRESSION scores for the English 33 Achievement Test is given below.

SUMMARY OF TOTAL EXPRESSION SCORES (ENGLISH 33)

CATEGORY	SCORE	PERCENTAGE OF PAPERS
Exceptional	5	0*
Proficient	4	1
Competent	3	35
Limited	2	56
Unsatisfactory	1	8

* Asterisk denotes less than 1 per cent.

- A summary of the distribution of the four aspects scores for the English 33 Achievement Test is given below.

SUMMARY OF ASPECT SCORES (ENGLISH 33)

	PERCENTAGE OF PAPERS RECEIVING EACH SCORE				
ASPECT	5	4	3	2	1
THOUGHT AND DETAIL	1	8	36	40	15
ORGANIZATION	1	5	34	46	14
MATTERS OF CHOICE	0*	3	35	51	11
MATTERS OF CONVENTION	0*	5	37	45	13

* Asterisk denotes less than 1 per cent.

DESCRIPTION OF PART B - MULTIPLE-CHOICE

- The multiple-choice test, consisting of 80 items, essentially examined students' understanding of "What is written" and "How it is written" as evident in selected passages from drama, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Specifically, this part of the test can be separated into three major sub-sections:
  - Meanings
  - Techniques, Structures, and Forms
  - Presentation of Character

- A sample passage and items follow.

Sample Passage

In the spring of 1935, when I was an undersized youth of fifteen, I made my first journey into arctic lands, under the tutelage of a great-uncle who was an amateur but fanatical student of birds. My Uncle Frank's consuming interest in wild things had been perpetuated in me, for from the age of six I too had been passionately interested in all the animals that haunted the rolling prairies near my home in Saskatoon. Our house in that western city had for long years been shared with pet skunks, coyotes, crows, gophers and rattlesnakes of uncertain disposition. Even my human friends were chosen almost exclusively from the half-wild and suitably ragged children at the Dundurn Indian Reserve, for I shared with those sons of nomads a strange devotion to the illusory freedom of the broad prairie plains. That restless longing to find affinity with primordial things was a legacy from my father, but it took shape and gained direction under the influence of Great-uncle Frank. He, at my mother's request, undertook to take me with him on one of his yearly pilgrimages to the ancient tundras of the arctic, where we were to spend a summer among the curious Northern birds whose very names were mystery in my ears, and whose ways of life were old before ours were begun.

In the first week of May 1935, the meadowlarks brought spring to Saskatoon — and Uncle Frank was close behind. Tall, gaunt and weather-worn, he was still filled with the indestructible energy which had carried him through arduous years of struggle with the tough sod of an Alberta wheat farm. He had acquitted himself well in that long battle against hail and blight, and now in his late sixties he was able to indulge his lifelong hobby, and so each new spring saw him voyaging to some distant place to watch birds whose lives he longed to know and understand.

To my young eyes, Uncle Frank was a somewhat dusty Olympian and beside him I felt as insignificant as a blade of twitch grass. Yet when he looked down upon me from his great, spare height, he seemed to be vaguely satisfied with what he saw and so, on the day following his arrival at Saskatoon, we two set off together for Winnipeg, the central gateway to the arctic lands. It was the beginning of an Odyssey. . . .

PEOPLE OF THE DEER, Farley Mowat

Sample Items

SUB-SECTION	ITEM	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RESPONDING
Meanings	Mowat's interest in nature was molded by his	
	A. father	9
	B. Indian friends	15
	*C. Great-uncle Frank	57
	D. unusual pets	19
Techniques, Structures, and Forms	In line 34, the author usues allusion to	
	*A. foreshadow events to follow	35
	B. contrast the past with the present	25
	C. indicate the universal significance of the journey	30
	D. suggest a yearly pilgrimage	10
Presentation of character	The author's attitude toward the Arctic Indians and Inuit is probably one of	
	A. condescension	16
	*B. affinity	32
	C. uncertainity	30
	D. indulgence	22

* Asterisk denotes correct answer.

RESULTS OF PART B - MULTIPLE-CHOICE

- The average scores for the three sub-sections and for the whole of Part B - Multiple-Choice are as follows:

SUMMARY OF MULTIPLE-CHOICE SCORES

SUB-SECTION	AVERAGE SCORE IN PER CENT
Meanings	45
Techniques, Structures, and Forms	41
Presentation of Character	44
PART B - MULTIPLE-CHOICE AVERAGE SCORE	44

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- The successful administration of the English 33 Achievement Test was the result of the concerted efforts of all involved; success would have been impossible without substantial contributions from many people, particularly the students, teachers, and administrators who extended their full cooperation.

DISTRIBUTION

- Officials of the Departments of Education and Advanced Education and Manpower
- Superintendents of Schools
- School Principals
- Post-Secondary Institutions
- The Alberta Teachers' Association
- Alberta School Trustees' Association
- General Public Upon Request

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Further information about the English 33 Achievement Test and additional copies of this provincial summary may be obtained from the Student Evaluation Branch or from the closest Regional Office of Alberta Education.

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11160 Jasper Avenue
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Regional Offices

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Calgary	261-6353
Lethbridge	329-5243